



## **MantisSport Takes Modern Division Honours at Targa Newfoundland Tarmac Rally**

Oakville residents, Ernie Jakubowski and Bill Comat teamed-up again to capture Modern Division honours in The Targa Newfoundland rally. It is the second time the Oakville residents have piloted the MantisSport Porsche 911 to victory in the grueling five-day tarmac rally which finished September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in St. Johns Newfoundland. They last competed in 2003, in 2004 the car was entered by another driver/co-driver team and failed to finish the event. This year they were accompanied by Ernie's brother Gunther and Richard Burpee who provided support services throughout the event.

Now in its fourth year, the Targa Newfoundland is North America's only event of its kind and saw 85 entries from across North America and from as far away as New Zealand, The contest comprised 42 speed stages from 4 to 38 km. each, totaling over 500 km. The rally covered 2,000 km. including transit stages. The event runs on public roads through 75 communities in Canada's eastern-most province. The cars and crews compete in one of four divisions; Historic for cars built pre-war, Classic for cars built from 1946 to 1976, Modern for cars built from 1977 to present time and Unlimited for cars that are modified beyond stock specifications.

The Targa (Italian for plate), is split into stages of varying lengths and complexity, each competitor is assigned a target time to meet on the individual stages depending on the car they are driving. Faster cars are required to complete the stage in less time than lower powered vehicles. This makes Targa a test of driving skill. You do not get any bonus for beating the time allotted; you get time points for every second you take to complete a stage over your target time. The event is run under ASN/FIA rally rules that stipulate a maximum speed limit of 200 kilometers per hour, and a maximum average speed per stage of 130 kilometers per hour.

**Preparation + Passion = Performance**

This year's victory was bitter-sweet for the MantisSport team. Richard Stryjski had made the journey to Targa Newfoundland in 2003 and returned to crew for the MantisSport team in 2004. A childhood friend of Ernie's brother Gunther, they had already made plans to take their vacations this September and participate in their third Targa. Sadly, Stryjski passed away unexpectedly of a heart attack early this summer. "Rick loved Targa" stated Jakubowski, "He enjoyed the people of Newfoundland, meeting and working with the other competitors, and he was looking forward to his third visit." Stryjski teamed with Gunther Jakubowski and Dennis Rak to provide service and logistic support for MantisSport and client competitors in 2003 and 2004.

Stryjski's contribution to Targa did not go unrecognized. When the MantisSport crew was called to the podium this year, Jim Kenzie, automotive journalist, fellow competitor (Kenzie teamed with Brian Bourbonniere to win the Unlimited Division for Mini Canada), and Master of Ceremonies for the event broke with tradition and asked Jakubowski to speak. He thanked the people of Newfoundland, the organizers of the event and then dedicated this victory to Richard Stryjski. A few moments later and unknown to the owner of Mantis Automotive, the first annual Stryjski Award was presented to the Subaru Canada support crew.

"It was a touching moment for everyone there" said Jakubowski, "Richard would have chosen the Subaru Canada crew; they have been of great assistance to us, and many other competitors who are new to rallying." The Subaru Canada team campaign a Subaru WRX for the Paynter brothers of Nova Scotia in Targa and the Canadian Rally Championship.

With less than one minute covering the top six competitors at the start of the last stage, this Targa was the most hotly contested in the four-year history of the event. Targa does not recognize an overall victor, but the competitors do. Bill Arnold, of California with Alan Ryall of Georgetown, Ontario, held off Jakubowski and Comat with a brilliant drive in the last stage to finish 2 seconds in front of the Modern Division MantisSport team in his 1972 BMW which competes in the Classic Division.

This year the target times for the competitor to meet in each stage were much more difficult than in previous Targas. “You had to be right on from the very start of the rally”, said Jakubowski, “last time we could easily meet our times on the first two days, they started to get difficult on day three, and this year we were pushing the car from the beginning, which separated the field quickly.” The weather also contributed this year. Unsettled maritime climate resulted in a variety of wet and dry conditions throughout the event, and rain greeted competitors throughout the final day.

Weather wasn't the only obstacle the MantisSport team faced this year. Their navigation computer, which calculates distance traveled and average speed for each stage wasn't working on the first day. It was just a faulty wire but it could not be attended to until the first days stages were complete. This required the MantisSport crew to navigate by eye for the first day. “Bill was great” stated Jakubowski of his friend and co-driver, “He has the ability to detect a situation quickly which gives me the time to react accordingly. It all comes down to trust, I trust he is giving me the right information, he trusts I will make the proper judgment driving the car.” They got through the first day penalty free, one of only four teams to achieve this.

And all of this for the prize of a silver plate which will be displayed proudly with the scores of other accolades Jakubowski has earned in his competitive driving career, which include six National Off-Road Championships, as well as a growing collection of road-racing victories. “We first went to Targa for the challenge. We returned because of the warm welcome we got from the people of Newfoundland and the camaraderie and friendships we developed with other competitors. Targa is becoming a community. We see each other once a year, compete hard all day, socialize and support each other at night. It is a very special event” said Jakubowski of this unique motor sport gathering.

“And yes, we'll be back” stated the now two time Modern Division champion. “Mantis is a part of Targa, not because of what I have achieved, but because of the whole MantisSport team, Richard's contribution and the wonderful recognition they paid him. Gunther, Bill and I felt like we went home to Newfoundland this year, we are all glad we went.” Then with a sly smile he continues. “There is the matter of 2 seconds; we came so close...” MantisSport will return. Ernie Jakubowski has unfinished business in Newfoundland.